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Love and Valor: Intimate Civil War Letters Between Captain Jacob and Emeline Ritner

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ers recognize that LeClaire and especially Patterson determined how this autobiography read. They included many remarks that Black Hawk probably did not make, for Patterson edited what LeClaire brought to him to make the life story of the then-famous Black Hawk appealing to white readers. Although Nichols wants readers to understand Black Hawk and Sauk life, he does not overwhelm us with an array of scholarly annotations. Rather, he provides enough to clarify particular individuals and places, but the bulk of the book is the text. He also supplies a short, solid bibliographical essay.

Although Nichols's concern for credibility is well placed, much of what is contained in this new edition of Black Hawk's autobiography is clearly either true or accurately reflects Black Hawk's thinking. For instance, Black Hawk's comments on his family history and life, his remarks on Sauk cultural ways, his rendering of his actions in the Black Hawk War, and his antipathy toward Keokuk all seem to honestly stem from Black Hawk.

Black Hawk may well be Iowa's most famous Indian, even though he lived in the area that became the state only during his last few years. His autobiography is well worth reading, and Roger Nichols and Iowa State University Press should be commended for bringing it to the public in a compact yet edifying format with the injunction that "modern readers using some care can indeed find much that was Sauk and that was Black Hawk in this account" (xxi).

Love and Valor: Intimate Civil War Letters between Captain Jacob and Emeline Ritner, edited by Charles F. Larimer. Western Spring, IL: Signourney Press, 2000. 453 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, appendix, bibliography, index. \$19.95 paper.

Reviewer Kenneth L. Lyftogt is a lecturer in history at the University of Northern Iowa. He is the author of *From Blue Mills to Columbia: Cedar Falls and the Civil War* (1993) and editor of *Left for Dixie: The Civil War Diary of John Rath* (1993).

Students of the American Civil War have long been fortunate in the availability of research materials. There are national and state military and political records, as well as an abundance of memoirs and personal letters. *Love and Valor*, as an example of a collection of personal letters, edited and annotated into book form, deserves to take its place in the Civil War bibliography.

The book is the result of years of family research by Charles F. Larimer of Illinois. Larimer explains in the book's introduction how he became interested in the subject and how he was able to use the Internet to enhance what was originally a family collection of letters from Jacob

Ritner, a Civil War officer. Most state and local archives have collections of letters from Civil War soldiers. Such letters were sent home from the front and carefully preserved by loved ones. But letters sent *to* the soldiers are rare. Letters from wives and sweethearts were carried on the march, read and reread, subjected to weather and camp life, and, as a result, were often destroyed. *Love and Valor* represents a refreshing exception. Larimer was able to find letters from Jacob's wife, Emeline—not as many as one might want, but the real thing—and her letters bring a magnificent home-front dimension to this collection.

A true love story unfolds as one reads the letters. Ritner was not eager to leave his wife and family to go to war, but his valor is exemplified by his willingness to serve, first for three months in the First Iowa Volunteer Infantry and later for the duration of the war in the Twenty-Fifth Iowa Volunteer Infantry. Emeline did not want her husband to be away, and often expressed her resentment of his absence, but she understood the magnitude of the struggle and tried to maintain life at home when it seemed that her husband and most of her male relatives were serving the Union.

This is also a first-rate Iowa story, with Jacob and Emeline and other family members writing to each other and expressing their views on the crucial issues of the age: the need to preserve the Union, the evils of slavery, the qualities of the officers under whom the men served, and the role of Christian faith in a family's life. The letters are rich in their descriptions of hometown life at each stage of the war as well as the process by which civilian volunteers slowly became true soldiers. If there is a deficiency, it is in Jacob's sparse battle descriptions. Although he was in some of the fiercest fights of the war, it is as if a gentleman does not offer the bloody details of combat to his wife.

The greatest strength of the book is its complete story, from the dream of a short war that would be over in three months to the grinding reality that the war seemed to go on forever, a reality that had profound effects on both the soldiers and their loved ones at home. Anyone interested in going beyond the scholarly narratives of the war and looking at primary sources will be well served by this collection.

Spirited Lives: How Nuns Shaped Catholic Culture and American Life, 1836–1920, by Carol K. Coburn and Martha Smith. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999. ix, 327 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$49.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

Reviewer Janet Welsh, O.P., is assistant professor of history at Dominican University. Her dissertation was "Where the Spirit Dwells: Catholic and Protestant

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